

APPENDIX TWO

THE ANGLO-NORMAN
VOYAGE OF ST BRENDAN

(Translation based on Waters' edition)

Prologue

- Lady Adeliza the queen,¹
Through whom divine law will be put into effect
Through whom terrestrial law will grow stronger²
For the military power
5 On account of Henry the king
Through the prudence that will be in you
Greets you a thousand thousand times
From the apostolic Lord Benedeit³
As you commanded, this at the beginning,
10 He has put into words in accordance with the best of his
ability
Into writing and the Romance tongue⁴
As was your command
The story of St Brendan, the good abbot.
But you should preserve him [*the author*] from being derided
15 When he says what he knows and does what he can:
This servant must not be blamed
But he who is capable and does not wish to
It is right that he should suffer much.⁵

¹ Adeliza, wife to Henry I, and daughter of Duke Godfrey VII of Louvain. In *ms C* the name of the patroness is 'Mahalt'.

² 'Lei de terre,' for a discussion of the use of 'terre' in the Anglo-Norman *Voyage* of St Brendan see Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' p. 5.

³ Discussed in Waters, *Voyage*, p. xxvi; also Wahlberg, 'Le nom de l'auteur,' p. 55; Jones, 'Precocity,' p. 157, n. 3.

⁴ Benedeit claims that he is a translator, cf. M. Dominica Legge, 'Lettre in Old French,' *Modern Language Review* 56 (1961): 333–34.

⁵ The dedication is summarised in *ms E* as 'Seignor oies que io dirai Dun saint home vos conterai Dyrlande estoit brandans ot non Molt ert de grant religion,' Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal 3516, fo. 96 r^o. For a discussion of the dedication see Sneddon, 'Brendan the Navigator,' pp. 224–25.

St Brendan

- This saint of God was born of kings
20 Born of Ireland
Because he was of royal line
Because of this he devoted himself to a noble purpose.
He knew well what the scriptures say:
'He who shuns the delights of this world,
25 Will have so many with God in heaven
That he could not ask for more.'⁶
On this account, this royal Irishman abandoned
False honours for the true ones—
Monks habits—to be contemptible
30 In this worldly life as in exile.
He took both the orders and the habit
And then he was perforce chosen to be an abbot.
Because of his skill many came there
Who observed the orders well:
35 Brendan the holy had three thousand
Monks under him from different places,
All taking their example from him
Because of his virtue which was great.

His Desire To See The Other World

- The abbot Brendan bethought himself,
40 Like a man who had much good sense,
Of good and sound counsel,
Like one who is very righteous in the sight of God
That he would make relentless prayers⁷
For himself and all his lineage
45 Both for the living and the dead—
For he was a friend of everyone;
But there was one thing which he particularly desired

⁶ Waters observes that, while the quotation does not correspond with any Biblical passage, the idea frequently occurs in the Gospels, for example, Matthew 6:19–21.

⁷ Short and Merrilees have *ferait* for Waters' *faisait*, which seems more appropriate.

- For which he began to pray to God more frequently
 That He should show him that Paradise
 50 Where Adam first occupied
 That which is our heritage
 And from which we were disinherited.
 He truly believes that there is great glory
 And as the true history tells us⁸
 55 But nevertheless he wanted to see
 Where he ought by right to sit
 But Adam transgressed by his sins
 And in this way he put himself and us outside.
 He prayed to God about it persistently
 60 That He would show him Paradise for his own eyes;⁹
 Before he died he wanted to know
 What abode the good people were due to have
 What place the wicked were due to have
 What reward they will receive,
 65 He wanted to see hell as well
 And what torments will suffer there
 Those traitors who because of their pride
 Have the audacity here on their own accord
 To wage war on God and the law
 70 And who among themselves have neither love nor faith.

The Narrative Of Barintus

- This thing which he has come to desire
 Brendan wishes to hear from God.
 But first before taking a decision
 He goes to a servant of God to make confession:
 75 The name of this hermit is Barrind,
 He has good habits and a saintly life.¹⁰
 The faithful servant of God lives in a wood
 He has three hundred monks there with him;

⁸ 'Holy Scripture'.

⁹ Literally, 'visibly'.

¹⁰ Discussed in Brown, 'Barintus,' pp. 339–40; cf. Bérout, *The Romance of Tristran*, ll. 1360–1422.

- From him he [*Brendan*] will take counsel and advice
80 From him he wants to have support
This man shows him in many words
Fine parables and good maxims
Which he saw at sea and on land¹¹
When he went to look for his god-son:
85 This was Mernoc, who was a brother
In the place where Barrind was abbot,
But he was very desirous of that
Which was elsewhere and more solitary.
With the help of his abbot and his godfather
90 He put to sea, and not in vain,¹²
For then he came to such a place
Where none can enter other than the pious:
It was at sea on an island
Where evil winds never howl,
95 Where it was fed with this perfume
Which the flowers emit in Paradise;
For this island was so near,
Where Saint Mernoc had sailed,
That from there Paradise could be seen
100 And the angels could be heard¹³
And then Barrind sought him out there
Where he saw that which he told Brendan.

Brendan Chooses Fourteen Companions

When Brendan had heard of the sight
That the latter had received there

¹¹ For a discussion of the use of 'eau', 'ocean' and 'mer' see Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' p. 9; see also Jean Larmat, 'L'Eau dans la *Navigation de Saint Brendan* de Benedeit,' *L'Eau au Moyen Age*, Senefiance 15 (Aix-en-Provence: CUER MA, 1985).

¹² Waters observes that no manuscript offers an entirely satisfactory reading to this problematic line. Burgess translates it as 'he had set sail on a mission, which turned out well'. All comparisons with Burgess's translation are taken from Burgess, 'The Anglo-Norman Version,' pp. 74–102. The translation has been revised in the 2005 paperback version.

¹³ ll. 99–100. literally translated as 'Of Paradise there was sight/ And of angels there was hearing'

- 105 The more he believed his advice,
And the more he began his preparations.
He selected fourteen of his monks,
The very best that he saw there¹⁴
And told them of his idea;
- 110 He wants to know from them if this is a wise course of
action.
When they heard this from him
Then they talked about it in pairs;
They reply to him one and all¹⁵
That what he was undertaking was very courageous
- 115 They beseeched him to take them with him
As his own sons, secure in faith.
Brendan said the following: 'I tell you this
That I would sooner be certain of you
Than take you away from here
- 120 And then be obliged to repent of having done so.'
They gave an assurance
That there would be no delay on their part.¹⁶
Then the abbot takes these chosen ones
And when he had heard what they all had to say
- 125 He has led them all into the chapter house,
There he tells them as a prudent man:
'Gentlemen, what we have in mind,
How difficult it is we do not know'¹⁷
But let us pray to God to instruct us,
- 130 At his pleasure he will lead us there;
And in the name of the Holy Spirit
We shall fast that he should guide us there
And we shall fast for forty days
On three days each week.'
- 135 Thus there is not one who delays
From doing that which he charges them
Nor does the abbot by night or day

¹⁴ Burgess: 'Those he saw to be the best'.

¹⁵ Burgess: 'They all responded as one'.

¹⁶ Burgess: 'That they would not hinder him'.

¹⁷ Short and Merrilees, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan*, ll. 127-28: 'We have no idea how difficult what we have envisaged is'.

- Cease his prayers
Until God send to him
140 The angel of heaven that would guide him
Throughout the journey as he goes,¹⁸
Deep in his heart he was so inspired
That he knew for certain
That God wanted him to go.
145 Then he takes leave of his brethren
To whom he was a very kind father
And telling them about his journey
How he wishes to entrust it to God.
He entrusts them all to his prior
150 Telling him how he must look after them;
He commands them to obey him,
And serve him as if he were their abbot.
Then Brendan kisses them and departed.
They all weep with great displeasure
155 That their father does not wish to take
More than fourteen of their brothers.

Preparations for the Voyage

- Brendan went off towards the great sea
Where he knows from God that he must embark
Never did he turn towards his relative
160 He is intent upon going to a dearer place.
He went to the furthest point of land
He did not desire to take rest;
He came to the rock which the peasants
Now call Brendan's Leap.¹⁹
165 This extends exceedingly far

¹⁸ Short and Merrilees suggest that this angel is the host who provides provisions for the brethren on their journey.

¹⁹ 'Le Salt Brandan'. This is a misunderstanding of the description in the *Navigatio* 'Saltus uirtutis Brendani', which refers to Brendan's meadow, see Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 1, 1, l. 5. (This, in turn, is a translation of the Irish 'Cluain-ferta Brenainn'). Waters observes that the Old French *salt, saut*, means 'leap' or 'projecting rock', and Benedeit seems to have used the example that one also sees in Bérout's *Tristan*, 'Encor claimant Coreualan/Cele Pierre le Saut Tristan' (ll. 953-4); cf. Waters, *Voyage*, p. 102.

- Out into the ocean just like a snout²⁰
 And on this promontory there was a haven
 Through which the sea receives a stream,
 But it was small and very narrow—
 170 It came straight down from the cliff
 No others, this I believe, before this man
 Had gone down this hill.
 To this spot he had dragged
 Timber from which he had his ship built,
 175 Everything inside was made of pine wood,
 The outside was covered in oxlhide;
 He had it besmeared so that it was smooth-running
 In the waves, and swift;²¹
 He put implements there as were necessary
 180 And as much as the ship could carry;
 He put provisions there as well
 Which he had carried there,
 No more than for forty days supply
 Of food he had put therein.

The Three Intruding Monks

- 185 He said to the brothers: 'Come on board.
 Give thanks to God, the wind is favourable.'²²
 They all climbed on board and he boards afterwards.
 Behold now three running forthwith
 Shouting to Brendan with a loud voice
 190 And holding out the palms of their hands towards him:
 'From your monastery we have departed
 And we have followed you as far as here.
 Let us, abbot, board with you
 And voyage with you, lord, on the sea.'²³

²⁰ 'Gruign': Waters translates this (in this instance) as snout. Burgess uses the term 'promontory' for its appearance here and in l. 167.

²¹ For a description of the construction of the coracle in the *immrama* see Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 38–41.

²² For a discussion concerning the term 'vent' see Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' p. 14.

²³ Cf Stokes, 'Máel Dúin,' pp. 460–1; Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 38–39; Bérroul, *The Romance of Tristan*, ll. 1708–10, 4040–42 and 4472–73.

- 195 He knows them and receives them on board;
He foresees clearly what will befall as a result.
What, through God, the abbot foresaw
He did not hide from them, thus he spoke to them:
‘Two of you Satan will have
200 With Abiram and Dathan.’²⁴
The third one of you will be greatly tempted
But will be well supported by God.’

The First Voyage

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- When the abbot Brendan had said this
Then he raised up both his hands
205 And prayed to God with all his heart
To preserve his faithful servants from storms;²⁵
And then he raised up his right hand
And blessed them all, the holy priest.
They raised the mast, spread the sail,
210 And go off smoothly, God’s faithful servants.
The breeze comes to them from the east
Which takes them towards the west.
They lose sight of everything
Apart from the sea and the clouds.²⁶
215 They are not idle waiting for a favourable wind
But they toil very much with their rowing
And wish to tax the strength of their bodies
In order to see that for which they are leaving home.
Thus they sailed for fifteen days,
220 Until all the winds became sluggish for them;
Then all the brothers were dismayed
On account of the wind which had ceased.
Then the abbot admonished them,

²⁴ Cf Numbers 16.

²⁵ Burgess: ‘torment’ rather than ‘storms’. See his discussion in Glyn S. Burgess, ‘La Souffrance et le repos dans *Le Voyage de saint Brendan* par Benedeit,’ *Miscellanea Mediaevalia: Mélanges offerts à Philippe Ménard*, vol. 1 (Paris: Champion, 1998), 267–77.

²⁶ For a discussion concerning the term ‘nuage’ see Burgess, ‘Les fonctions des quatre éléments,’ p. 14.

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- He whose courage never stumbles.²⁷
- 225 'Place yourselves under God's protection
And let there be no one who is dismayed.
When there is wind, sail in the same direction as it;
When there is no wind row accordingly.'
They therefore settle down to their oars,
- 230 They cry out loudly for God's favour,
For they do not know in which direction to go,
Nor which ropes they should haul,
In which direction to steer, nor which direction to direct their
course,
Nor where they should aim for.
- 235 For a month they row entirely without wind
All the brothers without complaint;
For as long as their victuals lasted
They could exert themselves without respite.
They lose their strength and food;
- 240 On this account they had great fear.

- When a great need befalls them,
God is not far from his faithful servants;
Of this no man should doubt.
He who undertakes a journey for God
- 245 While he does all he is able;
God will find him what he needs.
They see a land big and high;
The wind blows for them without stopping.
Those for whom rowing had become a toil
- 250 Are taken there without any hardship,
But they find no entrance
Where their ship could be moored,
For it was surrounded completely by rocks
Where not one of them dared ascend.
- 255 The hills are high stretching into the sky

²⁷ Burgess: 'Telling them [*the brethren*] not to lose heart.' Burgess uses Short and Merrilees who print *cesset*. Waters corrects this to *cestet*, 'stumbles.' Short and Merrilees point out that *que* could be interpreted as *cui* 'whose', as I have used it here, or as a conjunction, as does Burgess. I am grateful to Glyn Burgess for his guidance on this matter.

And suspended far above the sea.
From the hollows beneath, the sea eddies back
Because of which there is very great danger.
Upwards and downwards they looked for a harbour
260 And they spent three days in their search.
They find a harbour, they have landed there,
Which was cut in the grey limestone
But there was room only for one ship;
This harbour was well made in the pale rock.

The Uninhabited City

265 They make fast the ship, they all disembark,
They follow the road that leads them clearly;
It led them straight to a castle
Which was rich and big and beautiful,
And seemed like a very royal place,
270 The estate of a very rich emperor.
They went in inside the walls
Which were all made of hard crystal;
They see a palace all in marble,
There were no houses made of wood;
275 Gems with gold make great brightness
With which the walls are decorated;²⁸
But one thing displeased them greatly,
That there was no human within the city.
Thus they gaze at the lofty palace,
280 And enter therein in the name of peace.
Brendan has gone into the palace,
And then has sat down on a bench.
He did not see anyone else other than his men;
He begins to speak and has said to them:
285 'Go and look in these kitchens and stores
If there is anything of which we have need.'
They went there and found
That which they then most desired,

²⁸ Compare this with the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21.

- 290 This was a supply of food,
And a great abundance of drink²⁹
The crockery was of gold and silver
Which was very good and fine.
Whatsoever they had wished for, all in abundance
They found there in that place where they have entered.
- 295 The abbot said to them: 'Bring us some.
Do not take too much, this I forbid you
And pray to God each one of you for himself
That you do not break your promise to God.'
Because the abbot wished to warn them
- 300 For he well foresaw what was to come.
They brought sufficient provisions,
And they did not take any excess of it;
They ate as much as pleased them,
And as much as they then needed.
- 305 They did not forget to pray to God,
But they call out greatly for his mercy there.

The Stolen Goblet

- They venture to stay for the night;
When it was time they go to rest.
When they had all gone to sleep,
- 310 Behold Satan who seduces one of them:³⁰
He made him desirous to take by stealth
Gold which he saw collected there.
The abbot was awake and saw well
How the devil had a hold on him,
- 315 And how he held out to him a golden goblet—
There is nothing richer in any treasury.
The monk got up, went to take it,
And quickly stowed it away secretly;
And then when he had committed the theft,

²⁹ The uses of 'drinking water' are discussed in Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' p. 11.

³⁰ 'infantem scilicet ethiopem,' Selmer, *Navigatio*, caput 6, l. 56.

- 320 Came back to sleep in his resting-place.
The abbot saw all from where he was resting,
As this brother wandered around by night;
It did not fail to happen on account of the darkness
Without a candle he saw it all,
325 For when God wanted to show him this
He did not need to light a taper.
They stayed for three full days
And then on the fourth they went away.
Brendan said to them: 'Gentlemen, I pray you,
330 Do not take anything away with you from here;
Even the smallest amount of these provisions,
Not even water for any thirst.'³¹
Weeping greatly he said to the brethren:
'Behold, gentlemen, this man is a thief.'
335 The latter understood that the abbot knew
About the theft; and how he had
Found out about it; he makes his confession to all,
At the abbot's feet he waits for mercy.
The abbot said to them: 'Pray for him
340 You will see him die today.'
Before everyone of them, visible to all,
The devil comes out, shouting:
'I beg you, Brendan, for what reason
Are you throwing me out of my house?'
345 He said what he wanted to the brother,
He pardons him, and then absolves him.
As soon as he received communion,
In the sight of all death takes him;
The spirit goes to Paradise,
350 In complete rest where God has placed him.
They buried the body,
And pray to God that he take care of it.
This was one of the three brothers
Which the father received on to the ship.

³¹ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin,' pp. 476–79.

God Provides All Necessaries

- 355 They came to the haven and the shore
Behold very soon a messenger:
He brings them bread and drink,
And he asks them to accept it.³²
Then he has said to them: 'Be sure,
360 Whatever danger you see,
Whatever you see, do not be afraid:
God will give you very good fortune,
And you will see that which you are going looking for
By the grace of Almighty God.
365 And do not be concerned about the provisions
And the fact that you do not have enough here:
They will not be lacking until you come
Back to this place where you will take more.'
Bowing deeply, he handed them [*i.e. bread and drink*] over to
them;
370 He did not say any more, but went away.
Now God's servants have seen
That they are travelling by God's command,
And this has been proved to each one beyond doubt
By virtue of the miracles that they have seen;
375 And they have seen that God is feeding them.
In praising God no one is silent.

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The Isle Of Sheep

- They sail in the wind, and go away forthwith,
The protection of God is very close to them.
They sail on the sea for the best part of the year,
380 And endure hardship very well.
They see land in accordance with their hope
As far off as it could be visible to them.³³

³² Cf Jesus feeding the five thousand in Matthew 14:15–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:11; John 6:1–14.

³³ Burgess: 'on the distant horizon.'

- They turn their ship in this direction,
And none of them are slow to row there.
- 385 They slacken the ropes, take the sail down,
They came to land and jump ashore.
They see sheep in great abundance,
Each with a white fleece;
Every one was as large
- 390 As stags are in these woodlands.
The abbot said to them: 'Gentlemen, from here
We shall not move before the third day.
Today is Maundy Thursday,³⁴
When the Son of God suffered torment.
- 395 He is a kind and present friend to us,
Who has readily sent us
That with which we can celebrate his feast.
Think to drag the boat ashore.
Take one of these sheep,
- 400 Prepare it for Easter Day;
We shall ask God's permission for this
Seeing that we cannot find anyone else.'
They have done what he commanded
And for three days they remain there.
- 405 On the Saturday a messenger comes to them,³⁵
He greets them on God's behalf.
He had hoary hair, youthful eyes;
He had lived long without any danger.
He brought them bread from his country:³⁶
- 410 Big and very white unleavened loaves of fine wheaten flour;
And if they are short of anything,
He will find everything for them, this he promises well.
The abbot inquired about the nature of that place;
He doesn't know if he dare, but he said a little about it.³⁷

³⁴ Cf ll. 831 and 881. Here 'la ceine' (The Last Supper) is referred to as 'lur mandét'.

³⁵ Burgess: 'Sunday'. Waters and Short and Merrilees have this as 'Saturday'.

³⁶ Cf l. 141. If Short and Merrilees are correct in their assertion that the messenger is also the angel who guides the brethren on their journey (ll. 140–41), then the bread would represent manna from heaven (Exodus 16:15).

³⁷ The translation of this line is problematic and here I follow Burgess's translation, (see his note on p. 345, n. 7); this translation differs from that proposed by Short and Merrilees, for example, p. 84.

- 415 The other replied: 'We have in abundance
Whatever our hearts are able to think.'
The abbot exclaimed, 'There are sheep here,
Bigger than I ever saw anywhere.'³⁸
The other replies to him: 'It is no marvel:
420 The sheep here are never milked;
The winter is not inclement,
Nor did any one of them die of sickness here.
To that island which you see there,
Board your ship, Brendan, and go.
425 Tonight you will stay on that island
And you will celebrate your feast tomorrow there.
Tomorrow before nightfall you will leave it;
You will see clearly why so soon.
Then you will come back, and without danger,
430 Sailing quite close to this coast;
And then you will go to another place,
Where I am departing for and following you there,
Very close to here: I will find you there,
I will bring you enough provisions.'

The Great Fish

- 435 Brendan sails, nothing opposes him,³⁹
He goes to the island which he saw clearly.
He had a favourable wind and he was soon there,
But he had sailed across a very rough sea;
And so he goes where God leads him.⁴⁰
440 They land ashore, and without difficulty;
All the brothers disembark
Except for the abbot alone who stayed on board.
They had fine divine and very sincere services
At night and in the morning.
445 After they have all completed their service
In the ship as if in church,

³⁸ Cf. Orchard, *Pride and Prodiges*, p. 184.

³⁹ Literally, 'without hindrance'.

⁴⁰ Burgess: 'This is how things turn for those whom God guides'.

- Flesh from the ship that they put there,
They took out there preparing to cook;
They go off to look for firewood,⁴¹
450 With which to make their meals on land.
When the meal was prepared,
The steward said: 'Now sit down.'
Then they cry out very loudly:
'Ah! Lord abbot, wait for us!'
455 For the whole earth was moving,
And moving away from the ship.
The abbot said: 'Do not be afraid,
But pray fervently to the Lord God,
And take all our provisions,
460 And come to me on board the ship.'
He threw them pieces of wood and very long ropes⁴²
During all this they wet their clothes.
They all boarded the ship;
But their island rapidly moves off
465 From ten leagues away they saw clearly
The fire on it that they made there.
Brendan said to them: 'Brothers, do you know
Why you have been afraid?
It is not land, but an animal
470 Where we performed our feast,
A sea fish greater than the greatest.⁴³
Do not be astonished by that, gentlemen.
God wanted to lead you here for this
Because He wanted to instruct you.
475 The more you will see His wonders,
The better by far you will then believe in Him;
The better you will trust Him and the more you will fear
him,

⁴¹ For a discussion of 'feu' see Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' pp. 16–20.

⁴² 'Raps'—(ropes), an English loanword used by Benedeit which Short, amongst others, suggest demonstrates that the A.N. *Voyage* was composed in England, see Short, 'Tam Angli Quam Franci,' p. 155. Other loanwords used by Benedeit include *hasps* (l. 688) and *baz/bat* (boat, ll. 602, 890); see also Pope, 'Variant Readings,' p. 173.

⁴³ Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 97–98, also Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights*, vol. 3, p. 7.

The more you will obey his command.
First in rank the divine king made
480 This sea fish above all others.⁴⁴

*The Paradise Of Birds*⁴⁵

After the abbot Brendan had said this,
He sailed a wide distance of sea.
They see land high and clear,
Just as that brother had told them.
485 They soon arrive there and come to land,
Nor do they shun the landing,
Nor do they fear anything else,
But push the ship ashore;
They go off gently up a stream,
490 And drag their ship with ropes.
At the upper end of the stream was a tree
As white as marble
And the leaves are very broad,
Spotted with red and white.
495 Judging the height by the eye
The tree rose up above the cloud;
From the summit to the ground
The branches surround it very closely
And extend widely through the air,
500 It casts shade a long way and takes away the light,
It is all occupied by white birds—
Never did one see any so beautiful.
The abbot begins to marvel,
And prays to God his counsellor
505 That He explains to him the cause
And meaning of such an abundance of birds,
What place this is where he has come,
And that with his powers He instructs him about this.

⁴⁴ Cf. Genesis 1:21.

⁴⁵ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin,' pp. 492–93; Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 42–43 and 48–49; Stokes, 'Snedgus,' pp. 20–21.

- When he ended his prayer,
510 One of the birds flew down;
The flight sounded so sweetly
Like the stroke of a bell does;
And after it sat down on the ship,
Brendan spoke finely and gently:
515 'If you are God's creature,
Then pay heed to my words.
First tell me who you are,
And why you are in this place and for what purpose,
Both for you and all these other birds,
520 Because you seem very fine to me.
The bird replies: 'We are angels,
And formerly we were in heaven;
And we fell from on high so low
With the proud and the wretched one
525 Who through pride rebelled,
Rose treacherously against his lord.⁴⁶
He was placed as master over us,
He was duty-bound to feed us with God's virtues;
Because he had great knowledge,
530 It was necessary for us to accept a master.
That one was most disloyal through pride,
He scorned the word of God.
After he had done this we served him,
And as before we obeyed him;
535 Because of this we have been disinherited
From that kingdom of truth.
But since this was not caused by us,
We have all this by God's power:
We do not share the same punishment as those
540 Who showed pride like him.
We have no suffering except only this:
We are deprived from majesty,
The presence of glory,
And the joy before God.
545 The name of the place that you asked about,

⁴⁶ Revelation 12:7–9; cf. Dante, *Inferno*, canto III.

- It is the Paradise of Birds.’
And he [*the bird*] said to them: ‘Now it has been a year
That you have suffered the fatigue of the sea;
There are another six
550 Years before you come to Paradise.
You will suffer much hardship and trouble
On the ocean, upward and downward,
And every year you will celebrate the feast
Of Easter upon the beast.’
555 After he had said this, he went away
To the top of the tree whence he descended.
When the day was drawing to an end,
Towards evening accordingly they sing a hymn;
They cry out very loudly with sweet voices,
560 And in the hymn they thank God
For they have seen in their exile
Consolation such as they have.
563/4 The supreme king never before
563/4 Sent members of the human race there.
565 Accordingly the abbot said: ‘Have you heard
How well these angels have welcomed us?
Praise God for this and give thanks:
He loves you more than you think.’
They leave the ship in the water-way,
570 And eat on the shore;
And then they sang compline
Loudly with very great psalmody.
Then they all stretch out in their beds
And commend themselves to Jesus.
575 They sleep like ones who are wearied
And who have passed through so many dangers;
But nevertheless at the cock-crow
They say matins as on every day,
And to the series of notes together with them
580 The chorus of birds sing the responses.

Preparations For The Second Year

- At sunrise in the bright sunlight
Behold God's faithful servants coming
By whose teaching they have this guidance,
And by whose gift they have their food and drink.
585 The former has said to them: 'Of food
I will find for you great abundance;
You will have enough, and without trouble,
Until the Octave of Pentecost.⁴⁷
Then rest is necessary from your hardships:
590 You will be here for about two months.
Then he takes his leave and went away,
And on the third day he reappeared there;
Twice each week
The former visited the company.
595 They did as he has told them;
They all placed themselves under his guidance.
When the time came for their departure
They begin accordingly to make their ship watertight;
They sew oxhides all over it,
600 For those which are on it are becoming completely worn out;
They have enough of them and to spare,
So that their boat may be sound.
And they provide themselves well with everything,
So that they do not perish through want of anything.
605 The former delivered bread and drink
As much as they needed;
He has calculated everything for fully eight months:
The ship could not bear any more weight.
When the former and they have kissed,
610 They take their leave and then depart.
The former showed them with great weeping
In which direction they must set their course.
Behold the bird upon the mast;
He told Brendan that he had to leave.
615 He told him that he had a long voyage to do,

⁴⁷ The Sunday after Whitsun.

And many troubles to endure;
 For eight full months they would be waiting expectantly
 Before they could enter land,
 Before they could come to the Isle of Ailbe,
 620 Where they would be at Christmas.
 When he had said this, he tarries no more;
 The boat goes away quickly in the wind.

The Isle Of Ailbe

They go sailing quickly away to sea,
 Thanking God for such good wind.
 625 The winds increased for them, and very often
 They fear danger and great storm.
 After four months they see land,
 But it is very difficult for them to reach;
 And nevertheless in the end
 630 In the sixth month they saw the end.
 They put in to land, but nevertheless
 They do not find an entrance there;
 Around they go for forty days,
 Before they can enter any harbour,
 635 Because of the rocks and high mountains
 Standing before them on the land.
 Then very tardily they find a hollow
 Which a stream makes, which is of service to them.
 They steer their ship upwards;
 640 They take a rest, for they are tired.
 Then the abbot said: 'Let's disembark,
 Let's seek what is necessary for our bodies.'
 They all disembark one by one,
 The abbot with his companions,
 645 And they find a double fountain
 One clear, the other turbid.⁴⁸
 They go running there as they are thirsty.

⁴⁸ The motif of two springs may derive from Plato's *Critias*, p. 1302; cf. Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 58–59.

- The abbot said to them: 'Restrain yourselves.
I forbid you to take anything so soon
650 From here until we have spoken with the people
651/2 We do not know what is the nature of
The watercourses that we have found.'
They [*the companions*] fear the words of the abbot,
And keep their great thirst well in check.
655 Rapidly, and not tardily,
Behold a tall old man running.⁴⁹
They would have been afraid, had it not been for the habit –
For he was a monk—but he said nothing.
He comes and falls at Brendan's feet,
660 The latter raises the former up by the hand.
He bows deeply and humbly,
To the abbot and begins to embrace them all.
Then he takes Brendan by the right hand
To take him away to his place of abode;
665 He told the others by means of a sign
That they should come to see a most worthy place.
While they were going, the abbot has asked
What place this is where they have landed;
But the other is silent, makes no reply,
670 He welcomes them warmly with much kind joy.
They have gone so far that now they see
The place where they must go:
A good and fine abbey,
There is no holier one beneath the firmament,
675/6 The abbot of the place has its relics
And treasures carried outside:
Crosses and reliquaries and the ornamental metal cover for
gospel-books
Richly studded with amethysts
Adorned with gold and with stones
680 Precious and whole,

⁴⁹ The Húi Corra also encounter a community of Ailbe's monks, see Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 56–57.

- With censers of solid gold,
 And the gems set therein.
 Their vestments are all of gold—
 In Arabia there are none so reddish-golden
 685 With jacinths and sards
 Very big and perfect;
 With topazes and jaspers
 The clasps are just as bright.
 All the monks are clothed in surplices,
 690 And have come outside with their abbot.
 With great joy and great kindness
 The gentlemen make a procession;
 And when everyone has embraced each other,
 Each one leads the other by the hand.
 695 They lead into their abbey
 Brendan and his company;
 They perform a beautiful and light divine service—
 They did not wish to make it too heavy.
 Then they go and eat in the refectory,
 700 Where all are silent apart from the readers.⁵⁰
 Before them they have sweet and white bread,
 Very sweet-tasting and completely healthy;
 They have roots instead of a dish of prepared food,
 Which satiates them more than delicacies.
 705 Then they have a very sweet-tasting drink:
 Water sweeter than mead.
 When they are refreshed, they have got up,
 And go singing versicles in the monastery;
 They go singing *miserere* versicles⁵¹
 710 Until all the brothers reached the stalls,
 Except alone for those who served:
 They in their turn sat in the refectory.
 When the bell was rung,
 And after the canonical hour was sung,
 715 The abbot of the place led them outside;
 He explained to them about themselves and himself,

⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:25.

⁵¹ Psalm 51; cf. Burgess, 'The Anglo-Norman Version,' p. 346, n. 9.

- Who they are, how, since when they are there,
From whom, and by whom they get food there:
'There are twenty-four of us here
720 Who dwell in this holy ground.
It is eighty years since died
Saint Ailbe the pilgrim.⁵²
He was a rich man, of very great estate,
But he abandoned everything for this place.
725 When he went into seclusion,
A messenger of God appeared to him;
He brought him hither, found him ready
This monastery which is still there.
When we heard in several places
730 That the holy Ailbe dwelt here,
Through God we assembled here
For the sake of him whom we loved.
For as long as he lived, we served him,
And obeyed him as our abbot.
735 After he had taught us the monastic rules,
And had got us firmly established,
Then God took him very close to himself;
It is eighty years since he died.
God has supported us so well since
740 That nothing bad has happened to us,
No sickness of our bodies,
Nor affliction nor bitterness.
From God comes to us—we do not know anything else—⁵³
The food that we have;⁵⁴
745 We have no labourer here,
We do not see the one who brings it here,
But every day we find it quite ready,
Without us asking for it elsewhere,
Always on working days⁵⁵
750 A whole bread between two;
On festive days I have one to myself
For supper, and everyone has his;

⁵² Literally, 'since Ailbe the pilgrim took his end'.

⁵³ Burgess: 'We know of no other source'.

⁵⁴ Cf. 1 Kings 17:6.

⁵⁵ Burgess: 'each week day'.

- And of the two streams that you saw
 From which you very nearly drew water
 755 The clear one is cold, which we use for drink,
 The turbid one is hot, in which we wash.
 And at the times when we need
 We receive fire in our lamps,⁵⁶
 In spite of the burning that this fire does
 760 Neither wax nor oil gets used up any more;
 It lights on its own accord and it goes out on its own accord,
 We have no brother who deals with that.
 We live here and without any worries;
 We do not have a hard life at all.
 765 Before we knew about your visit
 God wished that we had provisions for you;
 He augmented it more than he was wont:
 So I am well aware that he wants us to receive you.
 On the last day of Epiphany
 770 Then and no sooner you will depart from here;
 Until then you will stay,
 Then and no sooner you will go away.’
 Then Brendan said: ‘There is no place so dear
 Where I would remain so willingly.’
 775 The abbot replies: ‘Go and seek for that
 For which you set out from land;
 Then you will return to your country,
 There you will die where you were born.
 You will depart from here in a week
 780 Eight days after Epiphany.’

The Intoxicating Spring

- When the day came which the abbot appointed,
 Brendan took his leave of him.
 The one abbot leads the other,
 And together with him all the monks.
 785 They set sail, and give thanks to God for a favourable wind
 Which takes them away from the Isle of Ailbe.

⁵⁶ Cf. Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin,’ pp. 476–79.

- They sail in the sea for a very long time,
But they have no indication of the direction of land.
They are without wind and provisions,
790 The bitter hunger and the burning thirst increased;
And the sea was so calm
That progress is difficult:
It was as dense as a marsh;⁵⁷
Many a one on board has no belief in deliverance.
795 God comes to their aid with a storm:
They see land and a landing place,
And the hungry men know for sure
That they are greatly loved by God.
They find their way in
800 As if it was pre-ordained.
They have a clear stream and fish therein,
And they catch more than a hundred of them there.
803/4 They have need of herbs which are in the boggy ground
Around the riverbed.
805 The abbot said to them: 'Do not desire
To drink too much immoderately.'
The latter drank from it according to their thirst;
They have no faith in the words of the abbot.
They took so much and afterwards in secret
810 On account of which they were called foolish.
For sleep fell upon them
For they lay down sleeping;
The ones who drank too much lay prostrate,
One for a day, another two, another three full days.
815 Brendan prayed for his monks
Whom he saw all flat out.⁵⁸
As soon as the latter came back to their senses,
They all considered themselves very foolish.
The abbot said to them: 'Let us get out of here,
820 So that you are not forgetful again.
It is better to suffer honourable hunger
Than to forget God and his invocation.'

⁵⁷ Cf. Tierney, *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, p. 74, ll. 31–32.

⁵⁸ Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (suite)', p. 71.

Friends Revisited

- They have departed from there by sea,
 Until Maundy Thursday came;
 825 Then father Brendan returned
 To the land where he was the previous year.
 Behold their host, the hoary old man.
 At the harbour he has pitched a tent for them;
 He has bathed the exhausted men,
 830 And has made ready new clothes for them.
 They perform the ceremony commemorative of the Last
 Supper and the Washing of Feet
 As it is required in the monastic rules⁵⁹
 And they are there until the third day.
 They went away again on the Saturday,
 835 And they go sailing on to the fish.
 The abbot said to them: 'Let's disembark here.'
 Their cauldron which they lost
 The year before, now they saw;
 Jasconius has kept it,⁶⁰
 840 Now they have found it on him;
 They are more secure on him
 And they celebrate a most beautiful festival there.
 All the night until the morning
 They did not cease to celebrate the festival;
 845 They celebrate Easter,
 They do not forget their canonical hours.
 They did not delay beyond mid-day,
 But then they reloaded their ship;
 All at leisure and all quietly
 850 From there they board their ship.
 The saint soon went away and hurries
 Towards the birds where they were before;
 They have clearly picked out the white tree

⁵⁹ Burgess: 'scripture'.

⁶⁰ *ms A* is unique in preserving the name *Jasconius*. This is discussed by Glyn S. Burgess, 'The Use of Animals in Benedeit's Version of the Brendan Legend,' *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, eds Clara Strijbosch and Glyn S. Burgess (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

- And the birds on the branches.
855 From far out to sea they heard clearly
When the birds welcome them;
They did not stop their singing
Until the sailors have arrived.⁶¹
They drag their ship up the stream
860 Where the year before they had their haven.
Behold their host who is pitching a tent;
He is bearing a ship-full of provisions
He said to them: 'You will be here a short time.
With your permission I am going back.'⁶²
865 You will remain here, and without any hardship,
Until the Octave of Pentecost.
Fear nothing, I shall not be a long time;
When it is necessary, I will come to your aid.'
They make their ship fast with chains,
870 And they are there eight weeks.⁶³
When the time came for their departure,
One of the birds begins to fly down;
Its flight has made a big circle round,
Then it has alighted in the sail-yard.
875 It will wish to speak; Brendan sees it,
He told everyone to be silent.
'Lords,' the former said, 'to this resting-place
You will make your return each of these seven years,
And every year at Christmas
880 You will stay on the Isle of Ailbe;
You will celebrate the Last Supper and the Washing of Feet
Where your host has commanded it;
And every year you will celebrate the feast
Of Easter on the beast.'
885 When it had said this, it went away
To the top of the tree from which it descended.
The ship floats deeply in the sea;
Everyone watches out for the host,

⁶¹ Short and Merrilees have 'li pelerin' where Waters has 'li marin'. Waters follows the metre.

⁶² Burgess: 'I shall return to say farewell'.

⁶³ Short and Merrilees state that this is seven weeks.

- Who has not delayed his arrival.
890 He comes, his boat laden with provisions,
And from his vessel loads theirs
With good provisions of great value.
Then he calls upon the Son of Mary
That he may take care of this company.
895 They fix the appointed day for their return.
At the departure they shed tears.

The Fight Of The Sea-serpents

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ebrary

- They sail with a completely favourable wind
Which makes them journey towards the west.
They have a sluggish and lifeless sea,
900 Which makes it difficult for them to sail.
When they have been under way for three fortnights,⁶⁴
Cold runs through their veins,
A great fear descends upon them,
Because their ship is in great peril,
905 And it was very nearly the case that a sudden storm
Overturned the ship with them in it.
Then something else came which dismayed them
More than any trouble that they endure:
Towards them came a sea serpent.
910 Which pursued them more quickly than the wind.
Its flames are fiery
Like the mouth of a furnace;
The flame is great, it gives out great heat,
That is why they fear death.
915 Its body is great beyond measure,
It bellows more loudly than fifteen bulls;
Were there no peril save only from the teeth,
One thousand and five hundred would flee before it.⁶⁵

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⁶⁴ 'Quinzeines,' literally 'three times fifteen days'.

⁶⁵ 917-18 are problematic lines and here I follow Waters's translation, Waters, *Voyage*, p. 116, Burgess translates this as 'Its teeth alone would have been a great threat to them, even if there have been fifteen hundred of them in the boat,' Burgess, 'The Anglo-Norman Version,' p. 88 and 346 n. 11.

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- 919/20 Nothing more than the waves alone which it set in
 motion
- 920 Was necessary to make a great storm.⁶⁶
 As it approached the pilgrims,
 Then Brendan, the true divine, said:
 ‘Gentlemen, do not become frightened:
 God will avenge you for it.
- 925 Take care that for foolish fear
 You do not lose God and good fortune;
 For he who takes God for his protection
 Must not fear any beast which roars.’
 When he had said that, he prayed to God,
- 930 That for which he had prayed did not remain unful-
 filled.
 They see another beast coming,
 Which is to stand up to it well.
 As the first one came straight for the ship,
 The second one which comes bellowed furiously;
- 935 The first recognised its adversary,
 Abandoned the ship, and drew back.
 The two beasts have met in combat;
 They raise their heads very high;
 The fires gush from their nostrils,
- 940 Up to the clouds which fly high;
 They strike each other with their fins,
 As with shields, and with their paws.
 Biting with their teeth they wounded each other,
 As if they were sharp like spears;
- 945 The blood gushes out from the fierce bites
 Which the teeth make in these big bodies;
 The wounds are very deep,
 As a result of which the waves are bloody.
 The battle was furious,
- 950 There was a great disturbance in the sea.
 And then the latter won the victory,
 And kills the first one;

⁶⁶ Here I follow Waters’s interpretation of the passage, but see Burgess, ‘Repetition and Ambivalence,’ p. 70.

- It pulled it about so much with its teeth
That it tore it up into three portions;
955 And when it had had its revenge,
It went back to its abode.
Man must not despair any more
But must establish more his faith as true,
When he sees that God so readily
960 Finds him food and clothing
And so much help in great peril,
And rescue from so many deaths.
The abbot said to them: 'Let's leave everything else:
Man must serve such a lord.'
965 They reply very willingly:
'For we know very well that he holds us dear to him.'
Then on the following day they see land
And expect to come safely to land.

The Voyagers are Miraculously Fed

- They go there very quickly and disembark
970 To rest their painful bodies.⁶⁷
They pitch their tent on the greensward.
And drag their ship up on to the dry land.
As they landed ashore,
The storms got up again;
975 Brendan recognises from the rainy atmosphere
That the weather will be very troublesome.
The wind has risen up against them,
And their provisions are running out;
But they are not dismayed on this account:
980 No matter what peril they endure.
The abbot has preached to them so much,
And everywhere God has always given enough,
That they cannot doubt at all
About any single thing on their journey.
985 Then after this, by no means tardily,

⁶⁷ Short and Merrilees has 'lassez'—'weary' instead of 'penez'—'painful'.

- The third portion of the fish comes;
The waves of the sea drives it onwards so much
That it makes it land ashore;
The sudden storm has driven it ashore,
990 And in this way it gives comfort to them.
Then Brendan said: 'See, brothers,
That which was previously your enemy
Now helps us by the grace of God;
You will eat for a long while.
995 Fear nothing, there will be food for us,
Whatever appearance it might show us;
Take as much of it, according to your estimation,
So that it is not lacking within three months.'
The latter acted according to his command:
1000 For so much time they stocked up.
Of soft water from the springs
They fill their barrels quite full,
And stock up with firewood.
Then when they have the breeze, they go away.

Griffin Versus Dragon

- 1005 God does not cease to work miracles.
Another danger besets them.
1007/8 If it had been the first of the two, this peril would not
(in their estimation) have been smaller than the other,
But would have been greater;
But they are not afraid on account of the regard
1010 That they have for God, and his protection.
A flaming griffin comes down out of the air,
It stretches out its talons to take them,
And it has flaming cheeks,
And extremely sharp paws.
1015 No plank of the ship would be strong enough
To prevent it from carrying it away with its claw;
On account of the mere force of its flight and the wind
that it makes
The ship very nearly capsizes.
As it drove them thus over the sea,

- 1020 A dragon came flaming very brightly;
It sets its wings in motion and stretches its neck,
And directs its flight towards the griffin.
The battle takes place up in the air;
The fires from both of them make a great light;
- 1025 Blows and flames and bites and thrusts
They give each other with the monks all watching.
The griffin is big, the dragon lean;
The former is stronger, the latter more violent.
The griffin is dead, it fell in the sea
- 1030 Those who have hated it are avenged.
The dragon goes away with the victory
The former [*i.e. the monks*] give thanks to God.
They go forward away from there;
Through God's spirit they are very wise.

The Congregation Of Sea-monsters

- 1035 The feast of St Peter the Apostle came
He who was killed in the gardens of Nero;
The former [*i.e. the monks*] celebrate his feast and glory,
To Saint Peter the first pope.
As the abbot performed the divine service,
- 1040 And as the canon law has established,
He sang very loudly with a resonant voice.
Then all the brothers say to him:
'Wonderful dear father, sing more quietly,
Or if you do not you will cause us to perish;
- 1045 For each wave is so clear,
Where the sea is deeper,
That we can see right down to the sea-bed,
And a great medley of fish.⁶⁸
We can see big and cruel fish—
- 1050 We never heard talk of their like.
If the noise arouses them,
Be sure that we must die.'

⁶⁸ Cf Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (Suite)', pp. 54–57.

- The abbot smiled, and reprimanded them,
And judged them to be very foolish:
1055 'Gentlemen, why are you afraid of anything?
How you thrust aside your beliefs!
You have suffered greater perils,
And God was a good guardian against them all.
This peril has not yet befallen you.
1060 Cry *Mea culpa!*' Brendan said to them.
He sang more loudly and more resonantly.
Powerful beasts rise from the sea,
They go alongside the ship and all around it,
Enjoying the day's festival.
1065 After the monks have sung that which was appropriate for
the day,
Each fish continued along its way.

*The Great Pillar And Canopy*⁶⁹

- They pursue their course forward and see clearly
A great pillar in the open sea;
It was made of natural jacinth,
1070 There was not an ounce of other material;
It was made of blue jacinth;
Rich would be the possessor of it.
It ascended upwards as far as the clouds,
It went down as far as the bottom of the sea.
1075 A canopy hangs around it;
From the top down into the sea it descends,
Delicately worked in precious gold—
It could not be made in exchange for all the world.
Brendan sails in that direction;
1080 It seemed to him to be a long while before he arrived there.
With sail raised he enters into the canopy
With his monks and with his ship.
He sees an altar made of emerald
Where the pillars descend into the sea;

⁶⁹ Cf Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (Suite),' pp. 52–55; Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 44–45.

- 1085 The sacrarium was made of sardonyx,
The pavement chalcedony.
Fixed into the pillar [*of jacinth*] there was
A beam of fine gold which supported the altar;
And the lamps are made of beryl.
- 1090 The monks fear no danger here;
They stay here until the third day.
They sing masses each in their turn.
Brendan reflects on this to himself,
He must not look for God's mysteries.
- 1095 He said to the monks: 'Trust my judgement:
Let us depart from here, let's go away.'
A very magnificent chalice
The abbot takes, all made of crystal;
He knows well that he is not being unfaithful to God,
- 1100 Since he is carrying it off in order to do him service there-
with.
The pilgrims have covered a great distance,
But still they do not know the end;
And nevertheless they are not idle,
But the further they go the more they exert themselves,
- 1105 They will not give up exerting themselves
Until they have seen what they desire.

The Smithy Of Hell

- A dark land appeared before them,
Of black fog and cloud;
It was smoking with putrid fumes,
1110 Stinking more than putrefying flesh;
It was surrounded by a great blackness.
The monks do not desire to take rest,
And from far away have now heard
That there they would not be very welcome.
- 1115 They make great efforts to direct their course elsewhere;
But they must take their course hither,
For the wind led them there;
And the abbot instructed them well,
And has said to them: 'Gentlemen, be aware

- 1120 That you are compelled to go to hell.
You never had greater need
Than you have now of God's protection.⁷
Brendan has made the sign of the cross on them:
He is well aware that the abyss of hell is very near.
- 1125 The nearer they get, the more evil they see,
The more they find the valley gloomy.
From the deep valleys and the pits
Big burning blades of metal fly;
The wind roars from blowing bellows,
- 1130 No thunder makes such a noise.
Sparks with the burning blades,
Burning rocks and the flames
Fly so high on account of this violence
That they take away the light of day.
- 1135 While they were going close by a mountain,
They saw a demon of whom they are afraid;
This demon was extremely big,
He came out of hell well heated up;
He carried an iron hammer in his fist—
- 1140 There was enough for a pillar.
As he became aware through his sight
In his eyes flaming like fires which burn,
And he sees the monks, he longs
To prepare his instruments of torture.
- 1145 Spewing flames from his throat,
With great leaps he runs into the forge.⁷⁰
He came back very quickly with his blade of metal
All red like a flame;
In the tongs with which he was holding it
- 1150 There was a load which was quite enough for ten oxen.
He raises it up towards the cloud,
And then he hurls it straight towards them;
A whirlwind does not go more quickly,
When the wind draws it up into the air,
- 1155 Nor does the bolt of a cross-bow,

⁷⁰ Cf Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (Suite),' pp. 53–55; Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 40–41 and 46–47.

- Nor a missile hurled from a sling,
 The higher it rises, the more it blazes,
 And it gathers strength as it proceeds;
 It first splits up, then combines again into one mass.
 1160 It does not fall on them, instead it passes beyond them.
 Where it falls in the sea, there it burns
 Like heather in a clearing;
 And the blade burns for a very long time
 With a big flame in the sea.
 1165 The wind has driven the ship onwards,
 On account of which they flee from there.
 They went away on the favourable wind,
 But they often looked behind them;
 They saw the island alight
 1170 And covered in smoke.
 They see several thousand demons
 They hear cries of the damned and weeping.⁷¹
 The stench comes to them, exceedingly great,
 From the smoke which spreads far through the air.
 1175 They put up with it as best they could,
 They escaped as much as they were able.
 Just as a holy man, when he has many hardships—
 Of hunger, thirst, cold, heat,
 Anxiety, sadness and great fears—
 1180 Increases proportionately his trust in God.⁷²
 Thus it is as regards them, after they have seen
 Where the damned are received.
 They make fast their trust in God,
 And do not direct unbelief towards Him.
 1185 They make their way forward, they fear nothing,
 For they know that they are getting on well.

⁷¹ Cf Stokes, 'Máel Dúin,' pp. 484–87.

⁷² Burgess, 'La Souffrance et le repos,' pp. 267–77.

The Smoke-capped Mountain

- It was early in the morning, when
They saw a place close to them:
A mountain covered with clouds;
1190 The wind took them there by force.
They soon came to the shore,
But it was of a very high elevation;
Not one of all of them could see
How high the mountain was;
1195 Towards the shore it does not descend any more
Than there where it extends upwards
And the earth is completely black—
The like of which there had not been in the whole of their
journey.
For what reason they did not know
1200 One of them jumps out; then they didn't recover him.
They have all heard what he has said to them,
But only the abbot saw it with his eyes:
'Gentlemen, I am now snatched away from you,
On account of my sins, believe it firmly.'
1205 And the abbot sees him dragged
By a hundred demons who make him howl.
They depart from there, they go elsewhere;
They look behind, for they are afraid.
The mountain is no longer covered in smoke,
1210 They see hell quite open.
Hell discharges fire and flames,
Burning poles and blades of metal,
Pitch and sulphur right up to the clouds,
And then receives them back, for they belong to it.

Judas

- 1215 Then Brendan led them across the sea,
Arming them with the sign of the cross.
Seeing a lump in the sea,
As if it were a rock;
And indeed, it was a rock,

- 1220 But they did not think it with confidence.
Then the abbot said: 'Do not tarry;
Let us find what it is and hurry towards it.'
And so they went there and they found
That which they had little expected:
- 1225 On the rock to which they had come
They found sitting a naked man.⁷³
He was greatly plucked bare and pulled about,
qLacerated and torn;
His face was bound by a cloth,
- 1230 He clung to a pillar.
Firmly he clung to the stone,
So that the waves could not tear him away;
The waves of the sea struck him strongly,
Enough to cause his death.
- 1235 One struck him, to the point that he nearly perished;
The other, behind him, threw him up;
Danger in front; danger behind,
Danger above, danger below;
Great torment on the right
- 1240 And no less on the left.
So greatly did the waves attack,
With great weariness he made his laments:
'Oh! Holy Jesus, if I dare,
Have mercy on me! I cry.
- 1245 Oh! Jesus, King of majesty,
Could my death not come about in winter nor summer?
Jesus, who rules all of heaven,
Your mercy is already so good;
Jesus, you are so merciful;
- 1250 Can there be no hour that I find relief?
Jesus, born of Mary,
I do not know whether I can cry for mercy,
I cannot, nor dare not, for I deserve so much punishment
That judgement is made on me.'
- 1255 When Brendan heard this lamenting,

⁷³ For a lexical discussion of Judas's suffering see Glyn S. Burgess, 'La Souffrance et le repos,' p. 275.

- Never had he felt such sorrow;
He raised his hand and made the sign of the cross over them
all,
To approach with great effort.
With his approach the sea did not move,
1260 No wind nor breeze disturbed them.
Brendan said to him: 'Tell me, wretched man,
Why you suffer this torment.
On behalf of Jesus, to whom you cry,
I command you to tell me;
1265 And with certainty to tell me what it is,
And what sin it is for.'
Brendan could speak no further for weeping
But then became quiet.
The other responded in a low voice—
1270 It was very hoarse and very weary:
'I am Judas, who served
Jesus, whom, I betrayed.
I am the man who sold my Saviour,
And for that sorrow I hanged myself;
1275 Pretending love by giving a kiss,
And divided when I must reconcile.
I am he who kept his money,
And squandered it surreptitiously;
And the gifts that he ordered to be given—
1280 To the poor, he exhorted them—
I concealed in my purse:
For this have sorrows befallen me;
And I thought that it was concealed
From he who made the starry heavens.
1285 But God well defends the poor;
Yet, they are rich and I [*am*] a beggar.
I am the traitor whom God despises,⁷⁴
The innocent lamb has been abandoned to the wolves.
When I saw that he was in the hands of Pilate,
1290 Then my spirit was downcast.
When I saw he was in the hands of the Jews,

⁷⁴ Burgess: 'The traitor who hated God'.

- The holy man handed over to the cruel men,
When I saw that they adored him with derision,
And crowned him with thorns,
1295 When I saw how badly he was treated,
Know that I was greatly saddened.
Then I saw that he was led to die,
I saw blood flow from his tender side.
When I saw him suspended on a cross,
1300 And he was sold to death by me,
I quickly offered back the thirty pieces of silver;
But they were unwilling to accept restitution.
I did not repent, rather
Instead I killed myself in my madness;
1305 And as I did not make my confession,
I am damned for all eternity.
You see nothing of the torment
That I undergo in hell;
This is a respite from my danger,
1310 That I receive from Saturday evening.
On Sunday, all day
Until the evening I have such rest,
And for the fifteen days of Christmas
Here sets aside my great pain,
1315 And on the feast of Mary
I have my torment in no way then;
And from Easter to Pentecost
I find so much relief; I have no more pain than you see;
On other feasts in the course of the year
1320 I have an intermission from my distress.
On Sunday, when evening comes
I depart from here to undergo my torment.'
Then Brendan said: 'Now tell me,
Because of the respite you have here,
1325 In what place do you dwell
In these torments and these pains?
And in what place do you have these pains?
As, when you depart from here, where do you go?'
Judas replied: 'The place is near
1330 Where there is fire from the devils;
It is not far, only a short distance;

- Far enough away that I do not hear them here.
There are two hells close by here:
It is great torment to suffer in them.
- 1335 Very near here are two hells
Whose works never cease summer or winter.
The most bearable is horrible,
And most painful to those who are there;
Those who suffer punishment there think
- 1340 The others suffer no adversity.
Outside myself, not a single one of us knows
Which of the two are more painful;
No one else has to undergo more than one of the two,
But I am wretched in both.
- 1345 One is on the mountain, the other is in the valley,
The salty sea separates them;
The two hells, separated by the sea,
But it is a marvel that it [*the sea*] does not burn.
That of the mountain is more painful
- 1350 And that of the valley is more horrible;
That near the sky is hot and sweaty,
That near the sea is cold and stinking.
For one night and one day I am there,
Then for just as long I remain below;
- 1355 One day I rise, another I descend,
There is no end to my torment;
These changes are not to lighten my torment
But to make my suffering worse
On Monday, both night and day
- 1360 I am turned on the wheel,
And wretch that I am, suspended on a hook,
Turned as quickly as the wind can do;
The wind drives it through the air,
Always I go round, always return.
- 1365 Then on Tuesday I am hurled,
And made insensible;
Over the sea and right to the valley
To the other hell where there is so much suffering.
There I am soon chained,
- 1370 Much reviled by devils;
I am laid upon spits,

- Upon me they place lead weights and rocks;
There I am pierced by a spit
Where my body is full of holes.
- 1375 On Wednesday I am hurled up,
Where my torment is changed:
For part of the day I am boiled in pitch,
When I am now stained, as you see;
Then I am removed and roasted,
- 1380 Bound to a post between two fires.
The post of iron is fixed there;
It is only there for my sake;
It is as red, as if for ten years
It has lain in a fire as bellows blow;
- 1385 And the fires catch the pitch
To increase my torment;
Then I am hurled again into pitch,
I am smeared in order to burn more.
There is no marble so hard
- 1390 That it would not be melted if it came there;
Yet I am made for this anger,
For my body cannot perish.
And such torment that troubles me,
I have for a day and a night.
- 1395 Then on Thursday I am taken to the valley,
To suffer the opposite torment
Accordingly I am placed in a cold place,
It is very dark and gloomy;
I am so cold that I long
- 1400 For the fires that burns strongly;
And then it seems to me that there is no torment
That I feel more than the cold;
And it seems to me that of each one
None is as strong than that I am placed in.
- 1405 On Friday I return upwards,
Where so many deaths await me.
There they flay all my body,
That nothing remains of my skin;
In the soot there is also salt
- 1410 Then they push me down with burning stakes;
Then they grow back rapidly

- New skins for this torment.
Ten times a day they flay me,
Then they force me into the salt;
1415 And then they make me drink
The molten lead with copper.
On Saturday I am hurled down,
Where the other demons change my torment;
And then I am placed in a dungeon—
1420 In all hell there is nowhere so terrible,
In all hell there is nowhere so filthy—
In going down, and without a rope.
There I lie, I have no light—
In the darkness and the stench.
1425 The stench comes there so greatly
That I am in constant fear that my heart will explode;
I cannot vomit on account of the copper
That they make me drink;
I swell, my skin stretches;
1430 I am full of anguish, all but split;
Such burning, such cold and such stench
Judas suffers, and such sorrows.
Since yesterday was Saturday,
I came here between nones and midday;
1435 I will have my rest sitting here.
Very soon I will have suffering in the evening:
One thousand devils will come forthwith;
I will have no respite when they have possession of me.
But if you have knowledge of such things,
1440 Tonight make me have rest.
If you are of such merit,
Make me be left free.
I know well that you are holy and pious,
Since you have come to this place without fear.’
1445 Brendan cried great tears
For this man who had so many sorrows;
He ordered him to tell him
Why the cloth had been bound,
And why he clung to the stone,
1450 He asked where and of what he came.
The other replied: ‘In my life

- I did little good and much evil.
The good and evil appear to me
Which in the heart are more dear to me.
- 1455 From the alms which I kept
I bought a cloth for a naked man;
For this I am granted this gift and am bound
Around the mouth so that I do not drown;
When the waves strike me in my face,
- 1460 To some degree I am thus protected;
But in hell it does not avail me,
For I did not buy it with my own money.
By a watercourse I made a hillock,
And then a strong little bridge above,
- 1465 Where many men had perished,
Then they passed unharmed;
For this I have this respite
From my great misery.’
As nightfall approached,
- 1470 Brendan saw that the man spoke the truth:
He saw a thousand devils coming
With torments and great danger;
And coming straight to this wretched man;
One leapt forward and seized him with a crook.
- 1475 Brendan said to them: ‘Leave him here
Until Monday morning comes.’
They argued and disputed
They would not be prevented from taking him.
The Brendan said: ‘I command you,
- 1480 And invoke Jesu my protector.’
So they were compelled to leave him;
They had no power to take him away.
Brendan was there all night;
The devils greatly annoyed by him.
- 1485 Devils were around;
Anxious for day to break;
A great grumbling in loud voices,
Saying that he [*i.e.* *Judas*] would have twice the suffering.
The abbot replied: ‘He will not have torment
- 1490 More than that given him by judgement.’
And then, as it had become full daylight,

- They departed with Judas.
Brendan went away from there.
He was certain of God's protection;
1495 And the monks all knew
That there were safe with God's guidance.
They thanked God for their voyage
And for all their equipment.⁷⁵

*A Monk Mysteriously Disappears*⁷⁶

- When the companions count their number,
1500 There is one missing in their count,
And they don't know what has become of him,
Nor in what place he has been detained;
They know what the first two have done,
But they are perplexed about the third.
1505 The abbot, who knew everything, said to them:
'God has done with him what pleased Him.
Have no doubt about this,
Thus keep well on your course.
Be aware that he has his last judgement,
1510 Either for rest or torment.'

*Paul The Hermit*⁷⁷

- And as they travel, they see rising up
A very high mountain all alone in the sea.
They come quickly to it, but the shore
Is steep and difficult of access.
1515 The abbot said to them: 'I shall disembark.

⁷⁵ 'agreies'—'equipment', discussed in Waters, *Voyage*, p. 128; also T.D. Hemming, 'Language and Style in the *Voyage of Saint Brendan* by Benedeit,' *Littera et Sensus: Essays on Form and Meaning in Medieval French Presented to John Fox*, ed. D.A. Trotter (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), 1–16, p. 6.

⁷⁶ This scene has been added to the A.N. *Voyage* as Benedeit omits the scene concerning the Island of the Three Choirs in which the second supernumerary leaves the company in the *Navigatio*.

⁷⁷ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (Suite),' pp. 494–95.

- Let no one move except for myself.
He ascends the mountain and goes for a long time
Before he has found anything.
His course took him through a rocky place,
1520 Then a large smooth stone came into view.
A man came quickly from this place,
He seemed like a religious and pious man.
This man calls Brendan forward—
For God had made him aware of his name—
1525 Then he kisses him; he told him to bring his companions:
Let no one be missing.
Brendan goes there, and gets them to come,
They make their ship fast to the rock.
This man has called them all by his own name:
1530 'Come forward and kiss me.'
This they did. Then he leads them
To his dwelling; he shows it to them.
They rest as he has told them to.
They gaze with astonishment at him and his dress:
1535 He has no clothing other than hair,
With which he is covered as if with a veil;
He had an angelic countenance,
And his whole body was celestial;
Snow is not so white or pure
1540 As the hair of this brother.
Brendan said to him: 'Fair dear father,
Tell me who you are.' The former: 'Willingly.
My name is Paul the hermit.
I am free here from all pains.
1545 I have been here for a very long time,
And I came away here under God's direction.
I shunned the worldly life to become a hermit in the wood:
I chose this life.
In accordance with the little intelligence that I possessed,
1550 I served God as well as I knew how to;
He accepted it in his kindness,
He has given me more credit for my service than I deserve.
There where he sent me instructions to go, here I came
Where I awaited my glory.
1555 How did I come here? I boarded a ship

- Which I found quite ready to travel;
God guided me quickly and calmly;
When I arrived, the ship went back.
I have dwelt here for ninety years,
1560 There is fine weather here, always summer;
Here I wait for the Last Judgement,
For that I have been commanded by God;
I am here in flesh and bone,
Without any suffering I am at rest.
1565 At the Last Judgement, then and no sooner,
The spirit will be separated from the body;
I shall rise again with the righteous
On account of the life I have known here.
I had a servant for a full thirty years,
1570 He was mindful of serving me:
He was an otter, who brought me
Often fish with which he fed me,
Three days every week;
Never was there any blank day
1575 When he didn't bring me three fish,
Which provided me with a copious supply of food.
1577/8 Suspended round his neck, full of seaweed,
He wore a small bag quite dry,
From which I could cook my fish.
1580 It was indeed the Lord, through whom these things were
done.
In the first years when I came here
For each of thirty years I was fed in this way;
I was fed so well on fish
That I did not need to drink anything;
1585 Our Lord was not at all troubled
To supply such provisions, nor greater.
After the thirty years the otter did not come again;
It was not too much trouble for him [*the otter*], nor did he
despise me,
But God no longer wished that from outside
1590 Provisions came for my body alone.
Here He made me the spring,
Which is full of all food and drink;
It seems to him, who drinks anything from it,

- That he is sated with all food and drink.
 1595 I have lived on water for sixty years,
 Thirty on fish, that makes ninety;
 And before that I was in the world fifty years:
 My age is a hundred and forty.
 Brother Brendan, now I have told you
 1600 How I have my delight here.
 But you will go to Paradise;
 For almost seven years you have searched for it.
 Before that you will return
 To the good host, where you stayed;
 1605 He will lead you, and you follow him,
 Into Paradise where the righteous are.
 Take some of this water with you,
 With which you may be protected from hunger and thirst.
 Go back into your ship, do not be a long time;
 1610 A man must not overstay and miss a favourable wind.'
 He gives his permission to depart, and Brendan takes his
 leave;
 He gives thanks for his good deeds.

The end of the Seventh Year

- Now they turn back towards their host,
 The sky is heavily overcast.
 1615 They sail for a long time before they arrive,
 Although they keep a straight course,
 And on Maundy Thursday
 They arrive there with great difficulty;
 They stay there as is their wont,
 1620 Until they must move from there.
 On Saturday they go to the fish;
 As in the other years they celebrate the feast there
 And they are well aware that now it is seven years
 That the fish is their servant;
 1625 They praise God for this, they do not fail to do so,
 Through God's unfailing virtue.
 And the following day they move from there
 With such a wind as they find;

- 1630 They go away straight towards the birds,
There where they will sojourn for two months;
There they stay in great happiness,
And await the favourable escort
Of their good host, who will make with them
The voyage which is so good and beautiful.
- 1635 He prepared for all their needs,
For he was well aware that the journey is long;
And he is well aware of everything they need,
For these he provides whatsoever he can.
They put to sea, the host with them;
- 1640 They will never return there again.

Paradise

- They steer their course towards the east;
They do not lose their way at all:
As there is someone on board who is acting as escort
They proceed with joy and happiness.
- 1645 With an unimpeded course, without interruption,
Forty days on the high seas
Thus they sail so that they see nothing
Apart from the sea and the heavens which were above
them;
And with the permission of the divine king
- 1650 Now they approached the fog
Which completely surrounded the Paradise
Of which Adam was the master.
Great clouds make darkness,
Which ensures that his [*i.e. Adam's*] heirs cannot return
there.
- 1655 The great fog blinds one so much,
That whoever enters it loses his sight completely,
And he has no sight of God
Who manages to pass through this cloud.
Accordingly the host said: 'Do not tarry,
But fill your sail with wind.'
- 1660 As they approach, the cloud divides
To the width of a street;

- The monks enter into the fog,
And have a wide road through.
- 1665 They put great trust in their host
On account of the cloud that they have alongside;
It is extremely big, and dense,
And it is heaped up on both sides.
For three days they sail all at full speed
- 1670 Along the course that presents itself to them;
On the fourth they come out of this fog;
The pilgrims are very glad.
They have come out of the cloud,
And they have seen Paradise clearly.
- 1675 First of all a wall appears to them,⁷⁸
Which was built up right to the clouds;
There was neither crenellation nor gallery
Nor embattlement nor tower.
None of them knows with certainty
- 1680 What material it might be made of,
But it was whiter than any snow:
The maker was the Sovereign King.
Everything was in one piece, without incisions—
There was never any labour in making it—
- 1685 But the gems shine very brightly,
With which the wall was studded.
There were many gold-spotted chrysolites
Thereon;
The wall blazes, all is on fire,
- 1690 With topaz, chrysoprase,
With jacinth, chalcedony,
With emerald and sardonyx;
Jasper along with amethysts
Shine brightly around the edges;
- 1695 The jacinth there is bright
With the crystal and beryl;
The one gives brightness to the other.
The person who set them was very skilled.
They convey great light to each other

⁷⁸ Cf. Revelation 21:12–20.

- 1700 From the colours which thus flash back.
The hills are high, of hard marble,
Where the sea beats upon the shore very far from the wall;
And upon the marble hill
Stands the mountain, all of fine gold;
- 1705 And then above the mountain stood the wall,
Of Paradise which encloses the flowers.
Such is the wall, set so on high,
Which ought to have been inhabited by us.
They head straight for the gate,
- 1710 But the entrance was very difficult:
There are dragons guarding it,
As if it was completely on fire.
Right at the point of entry hangs a sword—
He who does not fear this is not wise—
- 1715 The point of the sword downwards, the hilt upwards;
It is no wonder if they are afraid.
It dangles, and whirls round;⁷⁹
Just seeing it makes one dizzy;
Neither iron nor rock nor adamant
- 1720 Can be undamaged by its sharp edge.
Then they have seen a young man⁸⁰
Who comes towards them, very, very handsome;
And he is God's messenger,
He told them to come ashore
- 1725 They land; the youth welcomes them,
He calls them all by their correct name;
Then he has kissed them gently,
And calmed all the dragons down:
He makes them lie on the ground
- 1730 Quite humbly and without resistance;
And he causes the sword to be held back
By an angel whom he summons,
And the entrance is open.
They all enter in true glory.

⁷⁹ Genesis 3:24; for a discussion of 'En aines pent', see John Orr, 'Old French *en aines*,' *Modern Language Review* 22 (1927): 199–201.

⁸⁰ In Burgess's translation the Host and the Youth are the same person.

- 1735 This young man goes ahead,
 He walks through Paradise with them.
 Of fine woods and meadow-land
 They see a very fertile land;
- 1739/40 The meadow,
 1740 Which is perpetually fair with flowers, is a garden
 The flowers smell very sweet there,
 As beseems the abode of the pious,
 An abode delightful with trees and flowers,
 Very precious with fruits and scents.
- 1745 Neither of brambles nor of thistles
 Nor of nettles is there any abundance,
 There is no tree nor herb at all
 Which does not give off sweetness.
 Flowers and trees always produce fruit,
- 1750 Nor do they ever wait for any season;
 It is always pleasant summer there
 The fruit of trees and flowers is always ready,
 The wood is always filled with game,
 And all the rivers with good fish.
- 1755 The rivers there flow with milk.
 This abundance is everywhere.
 The reeds exude honey
 On account of the dew which descends from heaven.
 And there is a mountain it is all of gold;
- 1760 If there is a big stone, it is treasure.⁸¹
 The bright sun shines there without end,
 Neither wind, nor breeze makes a hair move there;
 No cloud comes into the air there
 Which would take away the brightness of the sun.
- 1765 He who will be here will have no suffering there,
 Nor will he ever know whence evil comes,
 Neither heat, nor cold, nor affliction,
 Nor hunger, nor thirst, nor privation;
 He will have all his desires in abundance.
- 1770 No matter how great is his desire
 He will not lose that, he is sure of it;

⁸¹ Burgess: 'No treasure house has a stone so big'.

- He will have it every day and will find it ready.
Brendan sees this joy clearly.
The space of time seemed to him extremely short
1775 When he remained there to see this;
He wanted to sit there for a long time.
The youth has led him a long way forward,
And he has instructed him about many things;
He explains well in detail, and so tells him,
1780 About that which will delight each one.
The youth goes in front, and Brendan after,
On to a high mountain like a cypress;
From here they see wonderful sights
For which they know no explanations.
1785 They see angels, and hear them
As if they are rejoicing at their coming;
They hear their great melody,
But they cannot stand it at all:
Their nature cannot comprehend
1790 Such great rejoicing, nor listen to it.
The youth has said to them: 'Let's go back,
I will not take you on further from here;
You are not permitted to go further,
For you possess too little knowledge for this.
1795 Brendan, you see this Paradise
For which you have prayed to God so much.
You have seen a hundred thousand times as much glory
As you have ever seen before that.
Now you will not learn any more about it,
1800 Before you return.
Where you now came in body
Soon you will return in spirit.
Now off you go; so you will come back,
You will await the Last Judgement here.
1805 Take away these precious stones
As tokens of comfort.'
Then when he had said this, he went away,
He brought stones as tokens.

Brendan's Return And Death

- Brendan has taken his leave of God
1810 And of the beloved holy men of Paradise.
The youth has led them away,
Until they have all boarded the ship,
Then he has made the sign of the cross on them.
Very soon they have hoisted their sail.
1815 There their pious host remained,
For Paradise was his rightful estate.
And the monks sail away joyfully,
They have no hindrance from the breeze,
Within three months they are in Ireland
1820 By God's great virtue.
Already the news is travelling through the land
That he has come from Paradise.
His relatives are not alone in rejoicing,
But everyone is universally joyful.
1825 In particular his dear brothers are glad
Because they have now got their kind father back.
He often tells them where they have wandered,
Where they were content, and where they were distressed;
And he also told them how he found a ready response
1830 When he asked God for anything he needed;
And one thing and the other, he told them everything,
How he found that which he sought.
Several of them became saints
On account of the virtue that they saw in him.
1835 As long as Brendan was in this earthly life,
He assisted many through God's virtue.
When it came to the time that he died
He went back where God destined him.
Into the kingdom of God, where he went,
1840 More than a thousand go because of him.

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